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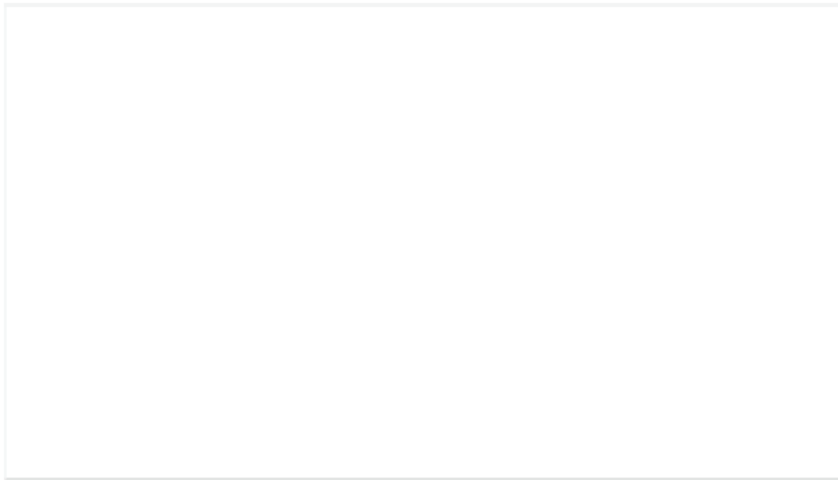


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## Paterson police officer and fire captain test positive for coronavirus

Joe Malinconico, Paterson Press Published 11:41 a.m. ET March 24, 2020 | Updated 6:20 p.m. ET March 24, 2020



**PATERSON** — A city fire captain and a Paterson police officer have tested positive for the coronavirus, causing municipal officials to place other first responders whom they worked with in quarantine, according to multiple sources.

Officials said they learned the police officer had coronavirus on Monday night, while the fire captain's positive test result came back more than a week ago. Their names have not been made public.

The officer works in Paterson's community policing unit, which is based in the South Paterson substation on Main Street away from headquarters, officials said. The city had begun quarantining officers he has come in contact with, officials said.

Meanwhile, the fire captain had been placed on quarantine prior to the test results, and members of two engine companies at the Hillcrest Firehouse, where he worked, also have been placed on quarantine, sources said.

City education officials have been using the same firehouse since March 17 as one of the sites where they distributed breakfasts and lunches to neighborhood families during the schools shutdown.

**Story continues below gallery.**

"The fire department went in and sanitized with fogger and disinfectant prior to the food distribution," said Mayor Andre Sayegh. "We also took extra precaution and brought in ServPro to further decontaminate the Hillcrest Firehouse. All the food is distributed on the exterior of the firehouse."

Officials said ServPro is a government-certified private contractor that disinfects and sanitizes buildings.

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For the most part, the meal distribution at the Hillcrest Firehouse took place on the sidewalk outside the firehouse, except for times when it rained, sources said. When it rained, the food was given out from a cordoned-off section at the front of the firehouse and the building's bathroom and other facilities were off-limits, sources said.

Meanwhile, the police department on Monday began conducting some of its roll calls outdoors in an effort to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

The police unions and rank-and-file officers have complained about the lack of protective equipment provided to city cops. Last week, Paterson PBA President Alex Cruz began buying disinfectant, gloves and masks, using his own money and union resources, to buy much-needed equipment, officers said.

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After Paterson Press inquired about the shortage of protective equipment on March 16, Police Chief Ibrahim "Mike" Baycora said the department had begun ordering extra supplies to address the coronavirus crisis.

As of Monday, officials said 36 Paterson residents had tested positive for the coronavirus, including one person who died, a 69-year-old woman.

The fire captain's illness had not been publicly announced. Paterson Press learned of his case while researching the case involving the police officer.

"Unfortunately, our first responders cannot work from home and are needed on the frontline," Sayegh said when asked about the police officer and fire captain who tested positive. "Therefore, we are taking all the necessary measures to protect those who protect us."

Kyle Hughes, president of the Paterson firefighters' union, praised city government's response to the health crisis. He said the city has gone "above and beyond" the standards of the federal Centers for Disease Control for protecting firefighters and the public against the virus.

School district spokesman Paul Brubaker said city education officials are "appreciative" for the fire department's help with the meal distribution.

"We have followed all of their instructions including their not allowing us to store food at firehouses overnight, not allowing volunteers to use restrooms, and only working outside of the firehouses or in designated bay areas when the weather was bad," Brubaker said. "It is edifying to know that the Hillcrest Firehouse was sanitized before student meal distribution began at that location."

The schools spokesman noted that [the district would be revising its meal distribution sites starting Monday \(/story/news/paterson-press/2020/03/23/paterson-nj-revising-school-meal-plans-amid-coronavirus-closures/2901274001/\)](https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/paterson-press/2020/03/23/paterson-nj-revising-school-meal-plans-amid-coronavirus-closures/2901274001/) a change officials said is designed to make things more convenient for families. As of Monday, he said, student meal distribution will take place primarily at district schools, all which have been cleaned during the past week.

City firehouses will no longer be used.

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